

Office of the Press Secretary on February 18. In his remarks, the President referred to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia; King Abdullah II of Jordan; King Mohamed VI of Morocco; former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestinian Authority; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraqi Shiite leader; President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Iraq

February 17, 2004

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Consistent with the Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002 (Public Law 107-243), the Authorization for the Use of Force Against Iraq Resolution (Public Law 102-1), and in order to keep the Congress fully informed, I am providing a report prepared by my Administration. This report includes matters relating to post-liberation Iraq under section 7 of the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 (Public Law 105-338).

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 18. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia and an Exchange With Reporters

February 18, 2004

President Bush. A couple statements, and I'm going to answer a couple of questions afterwards.

Mr. President, welcome. I'm glad you're here in the Oval Office. Thank you for your

friendship. I'm looking forward to a good discussion.

I want to thank you for working with the United States in the war on terror. I want to thank you for your understanding for the need for Iraq to be democratic and free. I appreciate the fact that you've got an education system that is modern and viable, that women in your country are given equal rights. I look forward to talking to you about the need to have a press corps that is vibrant and free as well as an open political process. There's a lot we can talk about. Tunisia can help lead the greater Middle East to reform and freedom, something that I know is necessary for peace for the long term.

So welcome.

President Ben Ali. Mr. President, thank you for very much for this opportunity. I am delighted to be here in the United States, and thank you very much for your generous invitation.

As you know, the Tunisian-U.S. relationships have been always unique and ancient. They go back for two centuries. Mr. President, we also look forward to increasing and cementing those relationships between the two countries in all spheres and every area, in order to continue to support the friendship between the two peoples and between the two countries.

We share principles together, Mr. President, and that is the establishment of states on the basis of democracy, human rights, and combating terror. We believe that Tunisia is an ally of the United States and the relationships between the two countries has strategic dimension.

And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the friendly American people who stood by us during our liberation and after our independence. Thank you very much.

President Bush. A couple of questions. Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Same-Sex Marriage

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. More than 3,000 same-sex couples have taken vows since San Francisco started issuing marriage licenses to gays and lesbians. This Massachusetts court ruling could result in the first legally recognized gay marriages in May. Do